

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

- Sub B1
1. A slot machine comprising:  
a basic game controlled by a processor in response to a wager amount, the  
basic game including a plurality of simulated reels on a visual display, the reels being  
rotated and stopped to arrange symbols on the reels in an array, the symbols on the  
5 reels including one or more special symbols; and  
an interplay feature activated by the processor in response to at least one of the  
special symbols appearing in the array, the special symbol interacting graphically with  
one or more of the other symbols in the array to portray one of a plurality of possible  
actions therebetween.
  - 10 2. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein the visual display is a video display.
  3. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein each of the special symbols is associated  
with at least one of the other special symbols.
  - 15 4. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein all of the symbols are special symbols.
  5. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein the basic game has one or more themes  
and each special symbol relates to at least one of the themes.
  - 20 6. The slot machine of claim 5, wherein the number of reels depends on the  
theme of the game.
  7. The slot machine of claim 5, wherein the symbols in the array are arranged in  
25 visual association with one or more pay lines, the pay lines including at least one  
thematic pay line.
  8. The slot machine of claim 7, wherein the thematic pay line is a scatter pay  
line.

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9. The slot machine of claim 5, wherein the theme of the game is selected from a group consisting of football, basketball, baseball, golf, hockey, volleyball, soccer, bowling, archery, people, objects, animals, and vehicles.

5 10. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein an outcome of the interplay feature depends on an input from a player.

11. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein an arrangement and outcome of the interplay are determined at least in part by a proximity of the special symbols in the  
10 symbol array.

12. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein the interplay feature rearranges or changes the symbol array.

15 13. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein the interplay feature generates a payout depending at least in part on an outcome of the interplay feature.

14. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein an outcome of the interplay feature affects initialization or scoring of a subsequent round of the interplay feature.

20 15. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein the interplay feature includes an action screen shown on the visual display.

25 16. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein the symbols in the array are arranged in visual association with one or more pay lines, the interplay feature illustrating the path of a pay line.

17. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein the number of reels is adjusted according to an outcome of the interplay feature.

30 18. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein a payout is determined at least in part by the symbol array before or after the interplay feature.

19. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein during the interplay feature the processor animates at least one of the symbols.

5 20. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein the interplay feature simulates a sports event.

21. The slot machine of claim 20, wherein the sports event is selected from the group consisting of a pitcher throwing a baseball, a hitter hitting a baseball, a catcher catching a baseball, a quarterback throwing a football to a receiver, a quarterback or receiver running with a football, a kicker kicking a football, a hurdler hurdling a hurdle, a pole vaulter vaulting a bar, a long jumper jumping a pit, and a basketball shooter throwing a basketball through a hoop.

10 22. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein the special symbol moves from a first position in the symbol array to a second position in the array.

23. The slot machine of claim 22, wherein the second position in the array is occupied by another special symbol.

20 24. The slot machine of claim 22, wherein the special symbol moves to a plurality of positions in the symbol array during the interplay feature.

25 25. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein at least one of the reels stops rotating after the processor initiates the interplay feature.

26. The slot machine of claim 1, wherein during the interplay the special symbol interacts with graphics on the display other than the symbols on the reels.

30 27. The slot machine of claim 15, wherein the action screen is superimposed over the symbols in the array.

SUB 12

28. A method of operating a slot machine under control of a processor comprising:

a) providing a basic game including a plurality of simulated reels on a visual display;

b) in response to a wager amount, rotating and stopping the reels to  
5 arrange symbols on the reels in an array, the symbols on the reels including one or more special symbols; and

c) providing an interplay feature in response to at least one of the special symbols appearing in the array, the special symbol interacting graphically with one or more of the other symbols in the array to portray one of a plurality of possible actions  
10 therebetween.

29. The method of claim 28, wherein the visual display is a video display.

30. The method of claim 28, wherein each of the special symbols is associated  
15 with at least one of the other special symbols.

31. The method of claim 28, wherein all of the symbols are special symbols.

32. The method of claim 28, wherein the basic game has one or more themes and  
20 each special symbol relates to at least one of the themes.

33. The method of claim 32, wherein the number of reels depends on the theme of the game.

25 34. The method of claim 32, wherein the symbols in the array are arranged in visual association with one or more pay lines, the pay lines including at least one thematic pay line.

35. The method of claim 34, wherein the thematic pay line is a scatter pay line.

36. The method of claim 32, wherein the theme of the game is selected from a group consisting of football, basketball, baseball, golf, hockey, volleyball, soccer, bowling, archery, people, objects, animals, and vehicles.

37. The method of claim 28, wherein an outcome of the interplay feature depends on an input from a player.

38. The method of claim 28, wherein an arrangement and outcome of the interplay are determined at least in part by a proximity of the special symbols in the symbol array.

39. The method of claim 28, wherein the interplay feature rearranges or changes the symbol array.

40. The method of claim 28, wherein the interplay feature generates a payout depending at least in part on an outcome of the interplay feature.

41. The method of claim 28, wherein an outcome of the interplay feature affects initialization or scoring of a subsequent round of the interplay feature.

42. The method of claim 28, wherein the interplay feature includes an action screen shown on the visual display.

43. The method of claim 28, wherein the symbols in the array are arranged in visual association with one or more pay lines, the interplay feature illustrating the path of a pay line.

44. The method of claim 28, wherein the number of reels is adjusted according to an outcome of the interplay feature.

45. The method of claim 28, wherein the payout is determined at least in part by the symbol array before or after the interplay feature.

5 46. The method of claim 28, wherein during the interplay feature the processor animates at least one of the symbols.

47. The method of claim 28, wherein the interplay feature simulates a sports event.

10 48. The method of claim 47, wherein the sports event is selected from the group consisting of a pitcher throwing a baseball, a hitter hitting a baseball, a catcher catching a baseball, a quarterback throwing a football to a receiver, a quarterback or receiver running with a football, a kicker kicking a football, a hurdler hurdling a hurdle, a pole vaulter vaulting a bar, a long jumper jumping a pit, and a basketball shooter throwing a basketball through a hoop.

15 49. The method of claim 28, wherein the special symbol moves from a first position in the symbol array to a second position in the array.

20 50. The method of claim 49, wherein the second position in the array is occupied by another special symbol.

25 51. The method of claim 49, wherein the special symbol moves to a plurality of positions in the symbol array during the interplay feature.

52. The method of claim 28, wherein at least one of the reels stops rotating after the processor initiates the interplay feature.

30 53. The method of claim 28, wherein during the interplay the special symbol interacts with graphics on the display other than the symbols on the reels.

54. The method of claim 42, wherein the action screen is superimposed over the symbols in the array. the symbols in the array.

SUB A3  
55. A slot machine comprising:  
5 a basic game controlled by a processor in response to a wager amount, the basic game including a plurality of symbols randomly placed in a symbol array, the plurality of symbols including one or more special symbols; and  
an interplay feature activated by the processor in response to at least one of the special symbols appearing in the array, the special symbol interacting graphically with  
10 one or more of the other symbols in the array to portray an action therebetween, the action being randomly selected from a plurality of selectable actions.

56. The slot machine of claim 55 wherein interplay feature generates a payout according to the selected action.

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SUB A4  
57. A slot machine comprising:  
a basic game controlled by a processor in response to a wager amount, the basic game including a plurality of symbols randomly placed in a symbol array, the plurality of symbols including a plurality of special symbols; and  
20 an interplay feature activated by the processor in response to a pair of the special symbols appearing in the array, different pairs of the special symbols interacting graphically with each other to portray different actions.

58. The slot machine of claim 57 wherein the interplay feature generates a payout  
25 according to the portrayed action.

SUB A5  
59. A slot machine comprising:  
a basic game controlled by a processor in response to a wager amount, the basic game including a plurality of symbols randomly placed in a symbol array, the plurality of symbols including one or more special symbols; and  
30 an interplay feature activated by the processor in response to at least one of the special symbols appearing in the array, the special symbol interacting graphically with

one or more of the other symbols in the array, the interplay feature generating an outcome depending upon an input from a player.

60. A slot machine comprising:

5 a basic game controlled by a processor in response to a wager amount, the basic game including a plurality of symbols randomly placed in a symbol array, the plurality of symbols including a plurality of special symbols; and

10 an interplay feature activated by the processor in response to a pair of the special symbols appearing in the array, the pair of the special symbols interacting graphically with each other, the interplay feature generating an outcome determined at least in part by a proximity of the special symbols in the symbol array.

61. A slot machine comprising:

15 a basic game controlled by a processor in response to a wager amount, the basic game including a plurality of symbols randomly placed in a symbol array, the plurality of symbols including one or more special symbols; and

20 an interplay feature activated by the processor in response to at least one of the special symbols appearing in the array, the special symbol interacting graphically with one or more of the other symbols in the array, the interplay feature generating an outcome that affects initialization or scoring of a subsequent round of the interplay feature.

62. A slot machine comprising:

25 a basic game controlled by a processor in response to a wager amount, the basic game including a plurality of symbols randomly placed in a symbol array in visual association with one or more pay lines, the plurality of symbols including one or more special symbols; and

30 an interplay feature activated by the processor in response to at least one of the special symbols appearing in the array, the special symbol interacting graphically with one or more of the other symbols in the array to illustrate the path of one of the pay lines.



63. A slot machine comprising:

a basic game controlled by a processor in response to a wager amount, the basic game including a plurality of simulated reels on a visual display, the reels being rotated and stopped to arrange symbols on the reels in an array, the symbols on the  
5 reels including one or more special symbols; and

an interplay feature activated by the processor in response to at least one of the special symbols appearing in the array, the special symbol interacting graphically with one or more of the other symbols in the array, the number of reels being adjusted according to an outcome of the interplay feature.

64. A slot machine comprising:

a basic game controlled by a processor in response to a wager amount, the basic game including a plurality of symbols randomly placed in a symbol array, the plurality of symbols including one or more special symbols; and

15 an interplay feature activated by the processor in response to at least one of the special symbols appearing in the array, the special symbol interacting graphically with one or more of the other symbols in the array to simulate a sports event.

65. The slot machine of claim 64, wherein the sports event is selected from the  
20 group consisting of a pitcher throwing a baseball, a hitter hitting a baseball, a catcher catching a baseball, a quarterback throwing a football to a receiver, a quarterback or receiver running with a football, a kicker kicking a football, a hurdler hurdling a hurdle, a pole vaulter vaulting a bar, a long jumper jumping a pit, and a basketball shooter throwing a basketball through a hoop.

66. A slot machine comprising:

a basic game controlled by a processor in response to a wager amount, the basic game including a plurality of simulated reels on a visual display, the reels being rotated and stopped to arrange symbols on the reels in an array, the symbols on the  
30 reels including one or more special symbols; and

an interplay feature activated by the processor in response to at least one of the special symbols appearing in the array, the special symbol interacting graphically with

one or more of the other symbols in the array, wherein at least one of the reels stops rotating after the processor initiates the interplay feature.

67. A slot machine comprising:

- 5 a basic game controlled by a processor in response to a wager amount, the basic game including a plurality of simulated reels on a visual display, the reels being rotated and stopped to arrange symbols on the reels in an array, the symbols on the reels including at least a pair of special symbols with a predefined relationship; and
- 10 an interplay feature activated by the processor in response to the pair of special symbols appearing in the array, the special symbols interacting graphically with each other in an animated event, the interplay feature generating a payout based upon an outcome of the animated event.